

Feeding of Grackles.

EDITOR OF 'THE AUK':

In 'Bird Genealogy' (Auk, XXIX, 1912, p. 294), I called attention to an interesting habit of the Bronzed Grackle of picking up food from the water, after the manner of a Herring Gull. "A Grackle will hover close to the water its head to the wind, and then suddenly drop, and with its bill pick up from the surface some morsel as gracefully as a Gull. This they do at times without wetting their plumage; at other times the bill, feet and tail are immersed, while I once saw a Grackle splash his whole body into the water and entirely immerse his head, to emerge without difficulty, carrying in his bill what appeared to be a small silvery fish."

This latter incident I witnessed at the Charles River Basin in Boston. Since then this habit has become more common among the Grackles in this locality, and at almost any hour of the day during this last June, one may see several Grackles dipping into the water for fish. The fish are brought to the coping of the Esplanade and eaten, or taken away to feed, no doubt, the young or mate. With the kind assistance of a Park policeman who succeeded in frightening off the birds before they could seize and carry off the fish from the coping, I secured three of these fish. They proved to be the three-spined Stickleback, *Gasterosteus aculeatus*.

Whether this is a new habit acquired by a small community of Grackles, or whether it is an old and universal habit I am anxious to learn, and it is for this reason that I am sending this letter to 'The Auk.' In either case the matter seems to me to be of exceeding interest to the student of habits and of evolution. Hitherto I have been unable to find any reference in literature to the habit. I shall be much obliged for any light on the subject.

On several occasions I have noticed that the fish were alive and active when the Grackles deposited them on the coping.

CHARLES W. TOWNSEND.

Boston, Mass.